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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06555 301316Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------039859 301319Z /43
O 301232Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6302
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY WARSAW IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6555

EXDIS

WARSAW FOR THE SECRETARY'S ATTENTION

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJ: ARAB-ISRAEL--DISCUSSION WITH FONMIN BOUTROS

1. HAD LONG CONVERSATION WITH BOUTROS MORNING DECEMBER 30. BOUTROS HAD ASKED ME TO COME TO TELL HIM WHAT I COULD ABOUT CURRENT STATE OF PLAY SADAT-BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS. I WAS UNABLE TELL HIM ANYTHING NOT ALREADY IN NEWSPAPERS.

2. BOUTROS ASKED WHY PRESIDENT HAD MADE STATEMENT AGAINST CREATION INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE AT THIS TIME, AND WHY BRZEZINSKI HAD MADE STATEMENT TO PARIS MATCH INDICATING HE NO LONGER CONSIDERED PLO AS INVOLVED IN QUESTION. I SAID PRESIDENT WAS GIVING YEAR-END INTERVIEW TO JOURNALISTS AND WAS MERELY REITERATING POSITION HE HAD MADE PUBLIC EARLIER. I GAVE HIM FULL TEXT OF REMARKS AS CONVEYED IN DEPARTMENT'S 309120, POINTING OUT THAT THOSE REMARKS WERE CONSIDERABLY LESS CATEGORICAL THAN LOCAL PRESS HAD
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INDICATED. BOUTROS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WAS NOT NEW POSITION BUT HE THOUGHT IT VERY UNFORTUNATE THAT PRESIDENT HAD CHOSEN TO REITERATE IT AT THIS TIME. IT WOULD BE VERY EMBARRASSING TO SADAT AND WOULD STRENGTHEN ISRAELI OBSTINACY WITH REGARD TO WEST BANK.

3. WITH REGARD TO PLO, WE HAD LONG SERIES OF INDIRECT

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CONTACTS WITH PLO AND HAD HOPED WE COULD BRING THEM TO ACCEPT 242. WITH PASSAGE OF MONTHS, HOWEVER, IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT MODERATES WITHIN PLO HAD LOST OUT TO REJECTIONISTS AND IT WAS PLO WHICH HAD OPTED OUT OF PROCESS, NOT WE WHO HAD PUSHED THEM OUT.

4. I SHOWED BOUTROS REPORT OF MEETING BETWEEN BEGIN AND AMERICAN LEBANESE LEAGUE WHICH TRANSMITTED TO US IN DEPARTMENT'S 309126. HE SAID IT COINCIDED EXACTLY WITH WHAT THEY HAD GOTTEN FROM OTHER SOURCES. WE THEN GOT INTO DISCUSSION OF QUESTION OF WHAT WAS TO BE DONE ABOUT PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. I SAID MY REMARKS TO PRESIDENT SARKIS ON THE SUBJECT HAD APPARENTLY BEEN MIS-INTERPRETED BECAUSE CHAMOUN WAS GOING AROUND TOWN TELLING PEOPLE I HAD SAID LEBANON HAD TO ABSORB THE BULK OF THE PALESTINIANS NOW HERE. WHAT I HAD DONE WAS POINT OUT THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM AND UNDERLINE THE NECESSITY FOR UNDERSTANDING ITS COMPLEXITY IF SOMETHING WAS TO BE DONE ABOUT IT. BOUTROS SAID HE ASSUMED THAT WAS WHAT I HAD DONE BUT PRESIDENT HAD MISUNDERSTOOD ME AND THOUGHT I SAID LEBANON WOULD HAVE TO ABSORB THOSE PALESTINIANS WHO DID NOT RETURN TO PALESTINE.

5. I ASKED BOUTROS WHAT HE EXPECTED TO COME NEXT AND HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC. HE THOUGHT SADAT WOULD EITHER BE FORCED TO SIGN A SEPARATE PEACE OR RESIGN. WHILE

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THERE WERE MANY LEBANESE, PARTICULARLY IN CHRISTIAN RIGHT, WHO WOULD PREFER THAT HE SIGN A SEPARATE PEACE, IF HE DID SO IT WOULD AUTOMATICALLY SPARK SERIOUS ADVERSE REACTION FROM MOSLEMS. BOUTROS SAID HE HIMSELF FRANKLY DID NOT KNOW WHICH OF THE EVILS WOULD BE THE LESSER.
PARKER

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Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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